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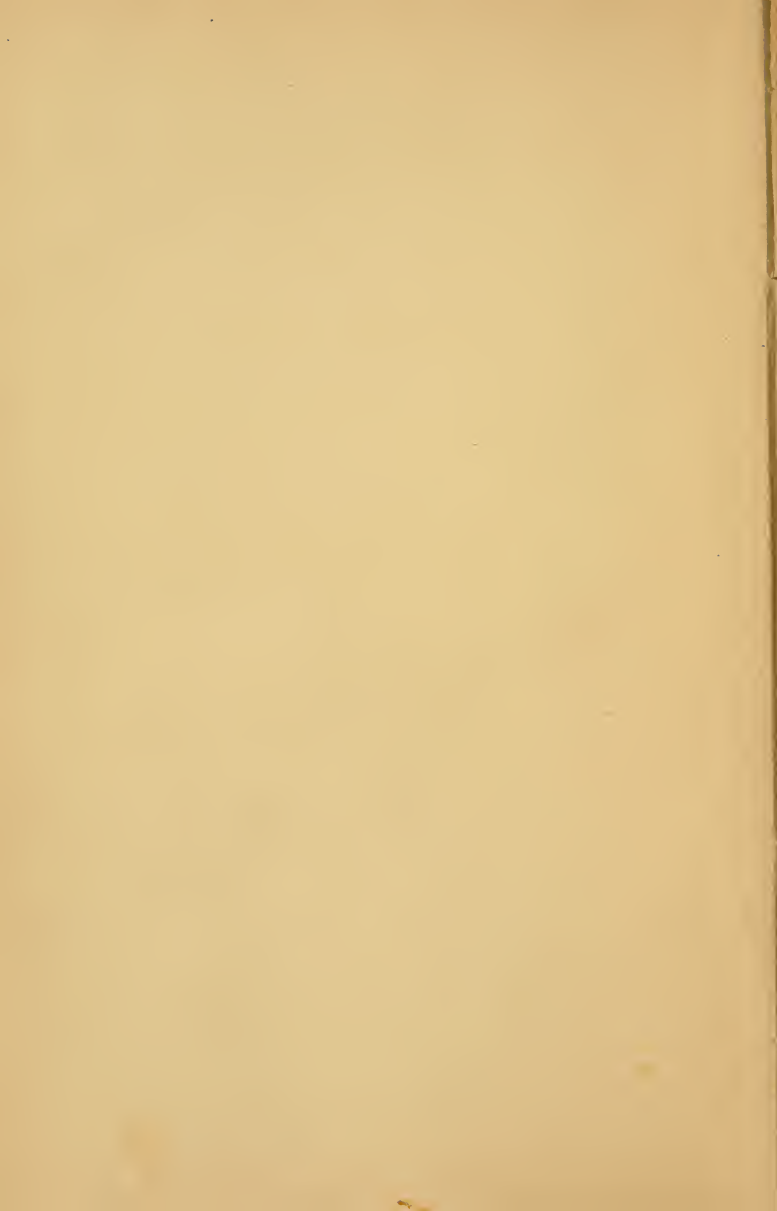
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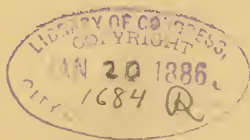


IN THE KING'S GARDEN

And Other Poems

BY

JAMES BERRY BENSEL
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BOSTON

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TO EMILY.

*We gathered apple-blossoms one fair day
And pink arbutus from the woodland near,
Wild roses growing by the country way
And clover too ; can you remember, dear ?*

*We gathered them for mother. Sister mine,
I pluck these leaflets from my tree of song
For her and you in Heaven, that sacred shrine
Where they by every right of love belong.*

*And you, I do believe, will feel and know
The heart-beats through them, and the tears in showers
That set so many of them forth to grow ;
Therefore I bring these as we brought the flowers.*

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IN THE KING'S GARDEN.

A KING of the old time, whose name and race
Are clean forgotten as his human face,
Beneath the shade of ilex-trees one day,
Wandering alone, came where the shadows lay
So deep and dark they made a twilight gloom,
Such as abides within a shrouded room
Where one is dead. The place was cool and
sweet

With garden scents that made it their retreat;
So the king paused awhile, and smiled to feel
The musky odors through his senses steal,
And the cool dampness of the tree-leaves lie
Thick on his hair. He turned, he knew not why,
To go, but caught the gleam of some bright
thing

In a far corner. "Lo, it is a ring!"
And so it was, but a white finger too;
A hand, wrist, arm, a shoulder into view

At the king's touch came quickly; then a face
Wistful and wan, but with a pallid grace,
Such as a lily has, that, plucked and worn,
Is white though faded, fragrant though forlorn.
And from the leafy cavern to the light
Of the fierce sun, the king with cheeks grown
white —

Most strangely white — the shrinking figure
drew,

And murmured with unwilling lips, "I knew
A face like this in years so long gone by
They might have never been, but for the high
And noble heart that fixed them there for me,
Firm-planted in the heaven of memory.
Who art thou?"

And the boy looked sadly up,
Then smiled, and took a massive silver cup
'Graven with quaint device, and set around
With jewels — jacinth, sard, and black pearl
found

Rarely enough by divers and of size,
The amethyst, which heavy drinkers prize,
Coral and emerald. This rich cup he
From out his girdle took, and on his knee

Slow-dropping, lifted it to where
The king's eye met its inner surface; there
Upon the polished curve the monarch saw—
Wonder submerged by a swift wave of awe—
His own passed baby-face, and then the eyes
Of his dead mother, who with mild surprise
Looked back at him. And then the mouth
Of his fair wife—pomegranates from the south,
Fresh cleft, were never sweeter—and the strife
Of nations, the fierce turmoils of his life,
The precious hours, now gone, that used to be
His recompense for kingship, and the sea
Of bitterness that washed against his throne,
And the great griefs his later years had known.
All of his life he saw there mirrored plain,
And gazed, and gazed with mingled joy and
 pain,
And old regret, and new-born longing, and
A hundred varied feelings. Yet the hand
That held the cup nor trembled nor drooped
 down,
Until at last he only saw his crown
Sparkling against the silver, and beyond—
A sight of grace indeed for maidens fond—

The lad's pale face, with dark eyes fixed on
his

Immovable as some far planet is.

And the king trembled—why, he could not
tell.

From distant towers he heard the sunset bell;
Above the palace wall the white moon rose
And shed its gleam upon the garden close;
A sea-breeze stirred the brilliant blossoms
hung

On slender stems. The birds, with nests among
The ilex boughs, began their evening hymn;
And lo! the royal sight was growing dim
From olden memories, that set to tears
The music silenced in those vanished years.
So, stretching forth his hand, the monarch said,
His palm laid lightly on the golden head
Of the strange lad, "What art thou?"

Who at last
Spake, fading with the answer,

"The King's Past."

So we, who are not kings but put away,
Sadly enough sometimes, each passing day

And then forget it, feel a presence near
In lonely hours ; a voice falls on the ear
Melodious, strange, yet half-familiar : so
We turn and see once more the grievous woe,
Bright dreams made real, mistakes, and good
 deeds done

We thought perhaps were hid from light of sun.
Ah me ! well is it that some things there be
To stir the placid deeps of memory ;
And, like the king, through misty vistas vast,
We watch the resurrection of our past.

MY BIRTHDAYS.

HOW like the beads upon a rosary slip
My birthdays through my fingers! Each
one bears

Its own prayer with it, but, indeed, the prayers
Pause at the cross, and then upon my lip
Lingers the longest of them all to sip
The fitful striving of my soul, that wears
My spirit with its passion and despairs
Of rising to fulfilment.

Prayers may trip
Sometimes, however high the soul is sent
Towards Heaven with them; and, alas, I think
Mayhap I dwell upon my cross too long,
Noting its burden. To be penitent
For sin is not enough; the heart must link
With penitence its own triumphal song.

Yet burdens are so heavy, and they eat
So oft into the very heart of things
And take the life out. Even the mighty wings
Of song will droop beneath the burning heat
And struggles of the day.

These years are sweet
As honey often, but they have their stings
From those who seek the sweetness. Each one
clings
Close to my hands as I its prayer repeat.
Oh, they are few, as older men count years,
So few, and yet they held undone so much
Worthy the doing; therein lies the loss.
But oft I could not see to do for tears,
And now this last one slips beneath my touch,
And once again the prayers have reached the
cross.

A MARBLEHEAD LEGEND.

CLOSE to the heart of the ocean there,
Where fields are green and the rocks are
bare,

And twittering sea-birds beat the air
With wings as restless as feet that tread
Its ghost-haunted shores, lies Marblehead.

The fishing-smacks to its bays come in,
And just below are the lights of Lynn,
While long Nahant with its finger thin
Points always out to the mystic place
On the other side of the ocean's space.

In days that were old when these were young,
These old gray houses with mosses hung,
And long ere yonder cracked bell had rung
Its jubilant peal as men made known
The hate they flung at an earthly throne;

When clover grew where the lanes to-day
Wind in and out their tortuous way,
Here to the church and there to the bay,—
A Spanish galleon rode afar
Beyond that point with its lighthouse star.

'Twas laden with riches heavily,
And brave, strong men on its decks trod free,
When the bride on board came forth to see
The rocks that glowed in the sunset's red
On the rough, dark shores of Marblehead.

But night drew near, and the pirates bold
Swarmed over the vessel, stern and hold,
And the Spaniards fell 'mid their silks and
gold ;
While one lived only — who best had died —
The Spanish admiral's English bride.

They brought her here to the beach we tread ;
They brought her living and left her dead—
The first great sin upon Marblehead.
And when the year to that night comes 'round,
In moonlit calm or the tempest's sound,

Above and over all sounds that be,
The fisherman in his boat at sea,
And the maid that is sleeping peacefully,
Hear out on the night air loud and clear
A woman shrieking in pain and fear.

And do you tell me it is not so,
Her voice died, too, in the long ago?
You may speak truly, I do not know.
But yet I feel it were well to think
Her voice still lives by the water's brink.

For sin can never be hid so deep
It shall not out from its cover creep,
And ghosts in our hearts do never sleep;
While a man I met this morning said
He had heard her cries at Marblehead.

FROM A FIELD.

HERE is a field of yellow buttercups,
Yellow as gold, but the wide-roaming bee
Passes them by, and takes long lingering sups
From the thick flowers on yonder locust-tree.

And yet my buttercups they bend and glint
Beneath the soothing whispers of the breeze,
Nor ever give to me a single hint
Of why they are neglected by the bees.

I take one home and put it in a vase,
A slender glass an old Venetian wrought,
And there the pretty blossom nods and sways
As if distressed by some regretful thought.

Ah, no, I do it wrong! It is to me
The floweret gently waves its golden shield,
Because, unlike the wandering, tricky bee,
I find how much of sweetness it can yield.

Like a bright bit of sunshine in my room
It gleams from out my precious little glass,
And I am conquered by a meadow-bloom,
A gold-capped priest who chanced my way
to pass.

For it has settled all my weird distrust,
All my unrest it quiets by its grace :
And grieving fancies blow away like dust
When the wild wind sweeps on in wanton race.

Ah, little yellow blossom of the mead !
Why should you bloom and then to-morrow
die ?

I may not know. I plucked you in my need,
And what you brought me none can tell but I.

Then wave before me still your shining shield,
And face me bravely who have seemed your
foe,

I pulled you ruthlessly from yonder field,
And having filled your mission you will go.

So I—who fain would be as great and grand
As others who have gone before—must be

Content as you to grow beneath God's hand
In the small field where He has planted me.

I lay aside the restless discontent,
I let the world that seeks for sweets go by,—
If you fulfilled your mission as God meant,
O little blossom, may not sometime I?

IN ARABIA.

“CHOOSE thou between!” and to his enemy
The Arab chief a brawny hand displayed,
Wherein, like moonlight on a sullen sea,
Gleamed the gray scimeter’s enamelled blade.

“Choose thou between death at my hand and
thine !
Close in my power, my vengeance I may
wreak,
Yet hesitate to strike. A hate like mine
Is noble still. Thou hast thy choosing,—
speak!”

And Ackbar stood. About him all the band
That hailed his captor chieftain, with grave
eyes

His answer waited, while that heavy hand
 Stretched like a bar between him and the
 skies.

Straight in the face before him Ackbar sent
 A sneer of scorn, and raised his noble head ;
“Strike !” and the desert monarch, as content,
 Rehung the weapon at his girdle red.

Then Ackbar nearer crept and lifted high
 His arms toward the heaven so far and blue
Wherein the sunset rays began to die, —
 While o’er the band a deeper silence grew.

“Strike ! I am ready ! Didst thou think to see
 A son of Gheva spill upon the dust
His noble blood ? Didst hope to have my knee
 Bend at thy feet, and with one mighty thrust

“The life thou hatest flee before thee here ?
 Shame on thee ! on thy race ! Art thou the
 one

Who hast so long his vengeance counted dear ?
 My hate is greater ; I did strike thy son,

“Thy one son, Noumid, dead before my face :
And by the swiftest courser of my stud
Sent to thy door his corpse. Aye, one might
trace
Their flight across the desert by his blood.

“Strike ! for my hate is greater than thy own !”
But with a frown the Arab moved away,
Walked to a distant palm and stood alone,
With eyes that looked where purple moun-
tains lay.

This for an instant : then he turned again
Towards the place where Ackbar waited still,
Walking as one benumbed with bitter pain,
Or with a hateful mission to fulfil.

“Strike, for I hate thee !” Ackbar cried once
more.

“Nay, but my hate I cannot find !” said now
His enemy. “Thy freedom I restore.
Live ! life were worse than death to such as
thou.”

So with his gift of life the Bedouin slept
That night untroubled; but when dawn broke
through

The purple East, and o'er his eyelids crept
The long, thin fingers of the light, he drew

A heavy breath and woke: Above him shone

A lifted dagger—"Yea, he gave thee life,
But I give death!" came in fierce undertone.

And Ackbar died. It was dead Noumid's
wife.

MY SAILOR.

HE lay at my side on that eastern hill,
My brave, sweet lad with the golden hair,
And gazed at the vessels which seemed to fill
The rippling breadth of the harbor there ;

The black-hulled vessels from over the sea,
The white-sailed vessels that came and went.
“I am going to sail away,” said he,
“To sail some day to my heart’s content !

“I shall see the waving of south-land palms,
The dark, fierce fronts of the icebergs tall,
And gather the grapes, as a beggar alms,
From vines on some Spanish convent’s wall.”

Then he drew my hand from beneath his chin,
And trailed my fingers across his lips ;

“Yes, we both will sail from this town of Lynn
In one of those staunch old black-prowed
ships.”

So one Summer evening his ship set sail
And floated off in the twilight grim;
I heaped up the vessel with blossoms pale
And wept that I could not follow him.

And I cannot say that the palms are there,
Nor icy mountains he longed to see;
But I know he sailed into lands more fair
And stronger arms, when he went from me.

O, my brave, sweet lad! how his angel eyes
Will gaze out over the ocean dim
That reaches from earth unto Paradise,
Till I set my sail and follow him.

TWO.

HE loved two women ; one whose soul was
clean

As any lily growing on its stalk ;
And one with glowing eyes and sensuous mien,
Who fired him with her beauty and her talk.

The pure one loved him to the day he died,
But when he died his dearest friend she wed.
The wanton from the wild world drew aside,
And no man saw her face till she was dead.

A RHYME OF SUMMER.

THE daisies nodded in the grass, the butter-
cups were sleeping,
And just across the river sang the farmers at
their reaping;
Upon the hills, so blue and far, the maple-
leaves were showing
Their pallid beauty in the breeze that from the
sea was blowing.
A little maid came through the land with song
and rippling laughter;
The buttercups made way for her, the daisies
nodded after.

A strong young farmer saw her pause beside
the parting river;
She drew a lily from its depth with golden
heart a-quiver.

“Thou art more fair than lilies are,” said he
with head uplifted;
And threw a poppy, which the stream swift to
the maiden drifted.
She set the flowers within her hair,—the red
and white together;
A cloud grew black before the sun and rainy
was the weather.

He came across the river then, this farmer,
from his mowing;
He heeded not the water’s depth, he cared not
for its flowing.
“O love!” said he, “if gleaming sun and cloud-
less skies o’erlean us,
The river’s barring width may roll unpassed,
untried between us;
But when loud thunder fills the air, and clouds
and rain come over,
I’d cross the ocean to your side,—I am no fair-
day lover!”

And so one noon the village bells rang out
across the river,

Their music set the buttercups and daisies all
a-shiver,
While some one drew a lily from the stream
so blithely flowing,
And plucked a blood-red poppy that amid the
wheat was growing;
The maiden set them in her hair — the red
and white together —
With many a smile, a tear or two, and glances
at the weather.

They passed beneath the chapel's shade — the
farmer and the maiden —
Where arches crossed above their heads, with
snowy blossoms laden,
And in that place of holy calm the binding
words were spoken;
He in his heart bore out the truth, she on her
hand the token.
The years went by, and some were bright and
some were clouded over,
But ever stood he at her side, — he was no
fair-day lover.

A SONG OF RAIN.

THE rain came over the mountain,
From a little town beyond,
To sprinkle the dust in the roadway,
And the lilies in the pond.

From the clover-sweetened meadow
The kine went up to the shed,
As the lightning flashed through heaven,
And the o'erfilled brooklet spread.

The buttercups bent and shivered,
While stricken leaves from the tree
Went sailing down to the river,
And thence to the mighty sea.

The rain passed on to the city,
And the clear blue sky once more

Stretched out in its tranquil beauty
Above the sea and the shore.

The cows went back to the clover,
While the children from the school
Ran merrily over the highway
For the lilies in the pool.

.

The rain of sorrow came over
Some distant hills in my life,
And the rolling of its thunder
Stirred a heart's rebellious strife.

I had not patience to shelter
Myself till the storm passed by
In the refuge of God's promise,
In the guiding of His eye.

But the rain in time went over
To some other life beyond,
And the warm, bright sunlight strengthened
The power of loving's bond.

To be sure, the storm had beaten
Some few frail twigs from my trees,

And I saw them pass my reaching
In the shoreless stretch of seas.

But I learned which boughs were strongest,
Which blossoms were brave to bear ;
While a richer incense sweetened
The cleansed and freshened air.

And yet, and yet I must wonder,
If the storm should come again,
Have I learned to walk with patience
Through its tumult and its pain?

And yet, and yet I must wonder,
Would I care to find the sweet,
If to gain its fullest fragrance
I must walk with aching feet?

Ah, God ! shall I pass with meekness,
If the bitter rain comes down,
From my bloom-sweet field of living
To some refuge bare and brown?

FAILURE.

I AM so weary of it all ; and yet
See how my hands are bleeding with the
strain

Of trying to be brave, to conquer pain
And sorrow ; 'yea, and trying to forget,
That is the hardest of them all. I let

The sleet and snow blow over me, the rain
And roses of the Summer that would fain
With sweet caresses pay my sweet love's debt.
I cry to heaven as if there were some spot
Through which my pain and passion might
be heard ;

But all must go for naught. No seraph band
Comforts or helps me. If I pray or not,
'Tis all the same ; no angel heart is stirred
To bring me balm, nor does Christ move
His hand.

ON AN ANTIQUE CAMEO.

CARVEN in sard, and quite as chastely cold
As the deep stone, a woman's face, a
Greek,

Or, mayhap, Roman. Gods! if it could speak —
This red-brown gem — what stories might be
told

Of the old time when even slaves were bold,
And weakness only lay in being weak
Of nerve and muscle. Some patrician cheek
Lent for the jewel's grace its soft sweet mould,
The man who carved it may have won him
fame

Out of this deft, clear limning, and the maid,
(Or was she matron?) it were like to be
Her regal face was than her blood and name
Less regal. Now a tossing leaflet's shade
Is more substantial than their memory.

OF LOVE.

TO meet thee? Why, to meet thee is to
draw

Long inward breaths of something more akin
To that great strength of strengths my soul
would win

Than I have known—to learn to love the law
That governs loving. Faith! I never saw

Thy face but that I read therein

How much I love thee, and it were a sin
To stifle love that has no fleck nor flaw.

Love grows so like the flower in yonder mead
That no man ever sowed, that God's own
hand

Planted and nourished with His sun and rain.
So true love grows. And, if thou hast no need
Of present love, still here for thee doth stand
Love in full blossom, bred of joy and pain.

TO BE DEAD.

WHAT is it to be dead? I think that I,
When I am dead, shall know no more of
pain,

Shall still be glad in sunshine or in rain;
May, at my mood, unto the ones who lie
Fast bound in sleep and whom I love, draw
nigh

And nestle close, and kiss and kiss again
The sweet pink lips; or when the sunbeams
wane

And soft stars shine serenely in the sky,
With veiling vapors o'er my spirit face,
And feet in silence shod, I may as now
Glide through the rooms where my small work
was done.

And those who sit within that haunted place
Shall say, "How near to us he is!" And how
The dear, sad souls will long to see the sun!

THE PASSING OF SUMMER.

SHE gathers up her robes of green and gold,
The fair, sweet Summer, and across the
land

We see her go, with outward-reaching hand
Whose magic spreads its beauties manifold
Along the region by her sway controlled.

The trees, o'erhung with gorgeous banners,
stand

To see her pass them with a last command,
While all the world is draped in splendor bold.

She passes onward, from the lowlands first,
Then lays a reverent touch on every hill,
A smile of promise lighting up her face;
The brooks are fain to quench her fateful thirst,
And glowing carpets line her roadway still,
The splendid queen departing from her
place.

A PORTRAIT.

I N the white sweetness of her dimpled chin
The pink points of her perfumed fingers
press,

And 'round her tremulous mouth's loveliness
The tears and smiles a sudden strife begin:

First one and then the other seems to win:

And o'er her drooping eyes a golden tress
Falls down to hide what else they might confess

Their blue-veined lids are striving to shut in.

The yellow pearls that bind her throat about

With her pale bosom's throbbing rise or fall:

The while her thoughts like carrier-doves
have fled

To that far land where armies clash and shout,

And where, beyond love's reach, a soldier tall

With staring eyes and broken sword lies
dead.

SONNET.

HOW can we say one man has lived in vain?

Nay! every soul that panteth into life
Is wonderful, because it hath had strife
With the great Death, and conquered, and shall
reign

Somewhere eternally, and throbs of pain
Have purified it. Yea, the earth is rife
With monarchs who have battled to the knife
And won their kingdoms, yet are free from stain.
Behold! the meanest dolt bears the same spark
In him that triple-crownèd genius bears,
And fights and wins the same. We have no
rule

By which to measure men, but in the dark
Of our own ignorance divide the tares
From wheat, and choose the teachers from the
school.

HER FACE.

I WOULD not look upon thy face again,
Nor now nor ever, though it was as sweet
As new-blown rose to me when it would greet
My eyes in that old time of love-sick pain.

O tender face! how often have I lain
And on thee gazed in hours so passing fleet,
Consumed by all the fire of passion's heat;
And now I fear thee more than woe and bane.

I would not look upon thy face, lest I
Might love it once again; for know I well
My greatest weakness centres in that face,
That dear, sweet face, which, till some time I
die,
I have forsworn to love. And heaven or hell
Will be to find or miss thee in Death's
space.

PATIENCE.

A SWEET-FACED maiden calm as marble is,
But powerful to stand against the blows
Of an unyielding Fate. No lustre glows
From out her eyes save that of peace, no kiss
Of passion ever touched her lips I wis,
Though their full curve is dewy as the rose
That, coloring mid-summer, buds and blows :
Albeit they are less tremulous than this.
She teaches to endure, she lays a hand
Both firm and cool upon the wounded heart,
And then her soft breath fans the heated
brow,
And every quivering nerve at her command
Is still.

O Patience ! why did'st thou depart
Ere I had learned to be as calm as thou?

QUESTIONINGS.

WHERE waits the woman I shall one day
claim

The right to call my own, the one whom I
Shall love with that great love which, till I
die,

Will feed my heart with its enduring flame?

For I, who have known many women, blame

The Fate which has not given me to lie

Prostrate with love that should be grand and
high,

A fact, a conscious truth, and no mere name.

And where is growing, too, the laurel bough

That all my life long I have felt was mine?

And where is the content my soul has said
Should one day come to it? And when and
how,

And why and what? Who plants the seed-
ling fine

Whose blossom I shall hold when I am
dead?

O foolish questions! O unwise unrest!
Who answers me? I only have to go,
Day after day, along my way, and know
That all things come in turn, as it is best:
To simply live is simply to be blest;
And doubtless he is like to overthrow
His builded hopes who strives to peer below
The dim foundations, which, were all confest,
Rise only upon vain imaginings,
Or, haply, on some whisper of his Fate,
Half-heard in some strange silence. Let
all be
As it shall come: nor let bright Fancy's wings
Your fond desires so foolishly elate
That what shall come shall come too suddenly.

A GLOVE.

AH, yesterday I found a glove
Grown shabby, full of tiny rips,
But dear to me because my love
Once through it thrust her finger-tips.

A glove one would not care to see
Upon his arm in public street;
Yet here I own there is for me
No relic in the world more sweet.

A faint, far scent of lavender
Steals from it, as the clover smelt
When through the fields I walked with her
And plucked the blossoms for her belt.

Faith! but I loved the little hand
That used to wear this time-stained thing!

Its slightest gesture of command
Would set my glad heart fluttering.

Or if it touched my finger, so,
Or smoothed my hair—why should I speak
Of those old days? It makes, you know,
The tears brim over on my cheek.

Poor stained, worn-out, long-wristed glove!
I think it almost understands
That reverently and with love
I hold it in my trembling hands.

And that it is so dear to me,
With its old fragrance, far and faint,
Because my mother wore it, she,—
On earth my love, in Heaven my saint.

GOLDEN-ROD AND ASTERS.

SOME gaudy prince has stayed here overnight :

For look, the road-side gleams in splendor
bright

With gold-embroidered plumes that decked his
train,

While stars of purple amethyst, like rain,
Have fallen from his robes.

Mayhap he grew
Weary of rioting, and straightway threw
His gorgeousness away ; then, smiling, went
Clad in humility and sweet content,
With tender lips and eyes, and open palms,
To ask for and, receiving, to give alms ;
While the rich garments that he laid aside —
Symbols of earthly glory and of pride —
The mighty grace of some strange sylvan god
Has changed to asters and to golden-rod.

AT EVENING.

UPON the hills the sunset glories lie,
The amaranth, the crimson and the gold.
Beside the sinuous brook that ripples by,
The dark, damp ferns their feathery grace
unfold.

The little yellow blossom of the field,
That shone a jewel in the splendid day,
Holds one small dew-drop in its bosom sealed,
And by to-morrow will have passed away.

The village windows gleam with gorgeous light,
And in the east a purple cloud hangs low,
A few brown birds sing out their hymn to night
On shadowy boughs — then spread their wings
and go.

Along the road the men that sow and reap
With heavy footsteps stir the whitened dust.

And up the sky—illimitable steep—

The moon climbs slowly to her sacred trust.

Oh, grand, strange trust! to be a light to those

Who lie all night impatient for the morn,

When the fresh fragrance rises from the rose,

And the sweet dew begems the sharpest thorn.

The stars, those sleepless eyes, peer through
the chinks

That pierce the shrouding darkness of night's
walls.

Each thirsty flower its draught of dampness
drinks,

And here and there a perfumed petal falls.

Then from the east a salty breath comes up

To cool the heated bosom of the world,

It lays its lip upon the lily's cup,

Whose white, soft edge its kiss leaves all
empearled.

And upward to the splendor of the stars

The fragrant moisture rises like a veil.

Night shuts its gate and drops the heavy
bars,

And somewhere morning waits, supreme and
pale.

SHE AND I.

AND I said, "She is dead, I could not brook
Again on that marvellous face to look."

But they took my hand and they led me in,
And left me alone with my nearest kin.

Once again alone in that silent place,
My beautiful dead and I, face to face.

And I could not speak, and I could not stir,
But I stood and with love I looked on her.

With love, and with rapture, and strange sur-
prise
I looked on the lips and the close-shut eyes;

On the perfect rest and the calm content
And the happiness in her features blent,

And the thin white hands that had wrought so
much,

Now nerveless to kisses or fevered touch.

My beautiful dead who had known the strife,
The pain, and the sorrow that we call Life.

Who had never faltered beneath her cross,
Nor murmured when loss followed swift on loss.

And the smile that sweetened her lips alway
Lay light on her Heaven-closed mouth that day.

I smoothed from her hair a silver thread,
And I wept, but I could not think her dead.

I felt, with a wonder too deep for speech,
She could tell what only the angels teach.

And down over her mouth I leaned my ear,
Lest there might be something I should not
hear.

Then out from the silence between us stole
A message that reached to my inmost soul.

“Why weep you to-day who have wept before
That the road was rough I must journey o’er?

“Why mourn that my lips can answer you not
When anguish and sorrow are both forgot?

✱
“Behold, all my life I have longed for rest, —
Yea, e’en when I held you upon my breast.

“And now that I lie in a breathless sleep,
Instead of rejoicing you sigh and weep.

“My dearest, I know that you would not break —
If you could — my slumber and have me wake.

“For though life was full of the things that
 bless,
I have never till now known happiness.”

Then I dried my tears, and with lifted head
I left my mother, my beautiful dead.

THE DESERTED HOUSE.

HIGH on the headland it stands,
The woodbine clasps it with tremulous
hands,
And the scarlet leaves through the windows
blow,
And the waves are fierce below.

Bare and dismantled it is;
The sunlight creeps in through the crevices
And over the stucco and wainscot plays
As it used in other days.

But then its glimmering tone
Through curtains of muslin and lace-work shone
Over satin-bound chairs and draperies,
And pallid piano-keys.

And now the casements are clear
Of all save the tendrils that flutter here,

Or some weary bird which, questioning flies
To the sill with mild surprise.

The rain has soddened the floors,
A wandering touch on the creaking doors
And they yield, while my feet are free to go
All over the mansion low.

The walls they will tell no tale
Of laughter and cheer, or of mournful wail;
Yet one cannot speak in this house of gloom
As he could in modern room.

So I press the keyless locks,
And standing again on the headland rocks
Look over the sea that reaches so far
With neither limit nor bar.

There is the wasting away,
Art given over to blight and decay;
Here is the freedom of God, with the great
Glory of Nature's estate.

Why ever wonder again
What mingled story of pleasure and pain

Was written within the bond of these walls
Where the sunlight faints and falls?

Why question? It stands, has stood
In its place for evil alone or good,
And naught that is left in power of man
Can lighten desertion's ban.

I pass down the cliff: no more
Shall my fingers move the shivering door,
No soul has the solemn right to intrude
On such ancient solitude.

Sometime it will fall and lie
Unheeded by thought or by human eye,
While woodbine, and asters, and golden-rod
May shield it from all but God.

THE STATUE IN THE WOOD.

THERE was a statue standing in a wood,
A gracious statue of a youth divine
Who lightly poised upon one arched foot stood,
As though prepared to quit that leafy shrine.

I marvelled at the cunning artist's skill
Who so could limn each muscle, feature,
grace :
Even the marble semblance of a hill
Was chiselled carefully as the sweet face.

And then I saw a little trembling vine
That clung with slight hold to the columned
base,
And sent its small shoots clambering toward
the fine,
Nude shape, whose beauty peopled that dull
place.

I stood enrapt, and for the moment knew
The passion that those ancient heathen felt,
Who formed their idols rich in shape and hue
And down before the rare perfection knelt.

Yea, I admired, heart and soul, and went;—
And all day long, and still for many days,
My sense was strong with a supreme content,
And all my thoughts turned backward still
to praise.

Years afterward I journeyed through that land
Where Summer smiles a half year round,
once more,
And so I thought again to go and stand
Before the statue as in days of yore.

With hasty steps I passed the woodland through,
Came to the spot and paused,—before me still
The golden sunlight shone and song-birds flew,
But vacant was the chiselled, marble hill.

Prostrate before the pedestal it lay,
That god-like form, and round about it
clung

The tendrils of the little vine alway,
And on the perfect limbs dark mosses hung.

Tears filled my eyes. "Aye, man may do his
best

In love and art, and sanctify a shrine!
But Nature holds the power within her breast
To overthrow his efforts by a vine.

"And hand-created idols only serve
To point man's follies homeward to his
heart."

And still that statue, grand in line and curve,
Lies prostrate there, a sacrifice of art.

FORGOTTEN.

A MONG some cast-off trinkets laid away
Within a curious box of Eastern make,
I found a sandal casket closed to-day,
Which had been quite forgotten since that May
I kissed the contents for a dead boy's sake.

Aye! and I wept, and bitter tears they were,
Although my memory held the things so
slight:
For the brown scentless bloom had nestled
there
Above his still heart, and the wisp of hair
Had shaded brows forever hid from sight.

I thought that day I never could forget
How well I loved him, as I sorrowed so:
But still, although my eyes have oft been wet,
It has not been that we no more have met,
Nor for his lying thus beneath the snow.

Ah! live and love, then die and be forgot,
So roll the cycles of our years away;
Nor can we hope to find a single spot
Wherein our memories shall fail to blot,
And blur, and be effaced some sunny day.

Man's love is nothing! mind you, I who speak
Do love as strongly as man ever loved:
But oh! 'twere foolishness to think one cheek
Shall lose its glow forever, when I seek
That haven our gross knowledge ne'er has
proved.

Yet I who sing this know that there are those
Who love me better than aught else on earth,
And follow me with prayers till daylights close;
But when I pass the reach of human throes,
I know as well they will forget my birth.

So little box of sandal and of pearl,
An o'er-wise lesson you have taught to-day
To me who had forgotten flower and curl,
Which, wild with grief as any love-lorn girl,
Within your case that Spring I laid away.

I had forgot ! poor foolish words are these
To offer at the dust-bound shrine I raised
To him I loved, and where upon my knees
I vowed, at each recurring May, though seas
Should intervene, to mourn him whom I
praised.

I had forgot ! well, let it be so ! I
Shall gain no other epitaph than this.
Let those who love me best so pass me by
With these three words while gazing where I
lie,
I had forgot ! 'tis better so, I wis.

REMEMBERED.

NAY, men have been who died to life and
me;

And looking back, the memory of all
The love I felt for them, the tears as free
As rain in autumn, seem a fantasy
Behind the years that fall.

But him! I have not looked upon his face
For years, indeed, and far from mine his
way;
Yet just as well through time and distance'
space

I can perceive the olden, loving grace,
As he were here to-day.

He lives within my world; however dim
My sight might grow, however closed my
ears,

I still could feel his warm lip on the brim
Of life's full goblet, and I know from him
No lapse could hide my tears.

Oh, life is love and love is life, be sure!
And once loved, always must that love be
strong;
Through every wave of strife it will endure,
From every bitter battle come more pure,
And stand in right or wrong.

Death only, as in pity, throws a veil
Across the burning of its mighty flame;
Death only makes the crimson strength grow
pale;
Before death, only, love will ever quail,
And not for grief or shame.

Oh, not because I loved this man the best
Do I remember all his gracious ways!
The man I had forgotten in his rest
Held just as great a place within my breast,
And garnered more my praise.

But he is safe. If we remembered such
As pass beyond us, with our present love,
If all day long we hungered for their touch,
Would not the burden weary us o'ermuch?
Would not life endless prove?

When time comes to it, all will be made plain
For them, for us. But those who still may
tread
This earth we know, can find remembrance gain;
Forgetfulness for them were greater pain
Than memory for the dead.

Then blame me not, because for him who lies
Beneath the snow I have no grieving tear;
While for my friend who looks on foreign skies
I wait and long. The dead one is so wise
He knows how passing dear

He was to me; and he who lives can feel
My love about him, though we should not
speak
Each unto each for years. One has the weal
Of death; the other bears the binding seal
Of life — and life is weak!

A LOCK OF HAIR.

HER eyes were full of truth and light,
Her slender hands were very white,
Her pretty voice was clear and strong,
And often trembled on the air
In some old-fashioned sacred song,
While I—I smoothed her fragrant hair.

She used to wear this in a braid—
My dainty, clear-complexioned maid—
A bright brown braid, with gleams of gold;
And oh! her face, so sweet and fair,
I loved it with a love untold;
And now I love this lock of hair.

Oh! beautiful she was, and true,
And where the lovely lilacs grew
I used to watch her at her play;
And now she sleeps forever there,

Where sunbeams lie the livelong day,
As once they glimmered in this hair.

I dare not pass her place of rest,
Where birds that loved her make their nest;
I think my heart would break, and I
Should never say another prayer
With faith that He would hear my cry,
Who left me just this lock of hair.

My little sister, far from me,
My darling dark-eyed Emily!
How much doth lie between us two,
How much of distance, time and care!
Or are these nothing more to you
Than is this curling lock of hair?

Sweet! surely God is good, and so
Our hearts and lips can wait to know
How some day, somewhere, they shall meet
And find the answer to their prayer.
Yes, some time God will answer, sweet,
My cry above this lock of hair!

THE MUEZZIN.

FAR purple hills and azure skies,
Tall, slender palms, that rise and rise
In plume-like masses towards the sun :
While narrow streamlets curve and run
As blue as Leda's lovely eyes.

Along the lofty parapet
A swarth muezzin paces yet,
Although the morning call to prayer
Long since was sounded on the air,
And hours must pass ere day will set.

He leans and looks and listens. Far
Below him, like a fallen star,
A gilded sandal lies unbound
From some swift foot that spurned the ground
Where the great mosque's long shadows are.

He holds his robe across his face,
And creeping on from space to space,
 From stair to stair in columned line,
He passes from the prophet's shrine
And lifts the sandal from its place.

.

What dark muezzin ever knew
Such eyes—like iris moist with dew?—
 What drunken bee e'er took his sips
 From roses sweet as Leda's lips?
Those lips that trembled as she flew.

First woman in the minaret,
She came for love of Ashtoblet,
 And dropped her sandal as she fled,
 While slept the city like the dead
Who nor remember nor forget.

And once again the sunset's glare,
And once again the call to prayer,
 And once again Night throws her veil
 About the lives that faint and fail,
And Ashtoblet upon the stair.

No call is sounded from his post
When pallid Morning like a ghost
Comes stealing through the city's gate,
And for a while the people wait
About the mosque, a silent host.

Then one, with finger at his lip
And heavy feet that pause and trip
And eyes that scarcely see for fright,
Comes stumbling on in woful plight
And guides to where the fountains drip.

There the muezzin Ashtoblet
Lies dead on banks of violet,
One red line on his dusky throat:
And to his heart, where all may note,
He holds a gilded sandal yet.

IN THE RAIN.

THE black clouds roll across the sun,
Their shadows darken all the grass :
The songs the sweet birds sang are done,
And on wide wings the minstrels pass.

There comes a sudden sheet of rain
That beats the tender field-flowers down,
And in the narrow fragrant lane
The white road turns a muddy brown.

And then the clouds roll slowly back,
The sun again shines fierce and hot,
The cows come down the sodden track
And munch the wet grass in the lot.

The flowers their moistened faces raise,
The wet leaves in the sunbeams gleam,
The birds, refreshed, resume their lays,
The children paddle in the stream.

How like to life such days as this!
The brightness and the storm of tears;
So much to gain, so much to miss,
The sudden overflow of fears.

Yet though the song is hushed a while,
We know 'twill break forth by-and-by,
We know behind the clouds the smile
Of radiant glory still doth lie.

Oh, let the sudden storm beat low
Our tenderest blossoms as it may!
And let our sweetest song-birds go,
They will return some other day.

We shall forget the sheeted rain
And all that looks so dark and drear,
Just as we have forgot the pain
That seemed so hard to us last year.

ON THE BRIDGE.

(FLORENCE, 1645.)

“TELL me, my friend—you loved him well,
I know,

But time enough has passed to kill your woe,
Or so at least to dull it, you may speak
His cherished name and not bedew your cheek
With tears—I pray, how did Edgardo die?
Is it the truth, when with averted eye,
With crimson face and fingers parted wide,
Men murmur softly, 'Twas in shame he died,
In wanton rankness?”

“He who said it lied!

Were it the king himself, or courtier, priest,
Or cup-mad brawler at a midnight feast,
He lied most foully! Yes, I loved my friend;
Saw him by night and day, and did attend
Such gay delights as he partook of; he
Was part and soul of perfect purity;

Edgardo never stepped a foot aside
From honor's pathway, and the whisperer lied,
Whoe'er he was, that told of shame to him.
Why, I have had him when the night was dim
Cradled upon my heart, and could believe
My own belovèd wife would me deceive —
Whom I do know pure as the virgin gold
Clustered within the lily's sealèd fold —
Soon as that he would e'er have hid from me
One single deed, whatever it might be.
Listen !

He loved a maid who was as sweet
As new-blown roses when their petals greet
The dewy morning's breaking, and as light
Of tread as thistle-blows in airy flight.
You knew my friend ! Not as are other men
Was he. We were together passing when
He saw her first ; we were together, too,
When next his eyes met hers. The Arno blue
Smiled, danced, and murmured underneath our
boat,
And from the maiden's forehead to her throat
I saw a glow like sunrise on far hills
Spread swiftly ; while, as wine that spills

Its ruby beauty from Venetian glass,
I watched a flush across his swart cheek pass.

“Day after day he met her ; day by day
Posted himself to cross her in her way.
At last he spoke, and she was quick to smile
And grasp his love with many a maiden wile.
To see them then was as though Paradise
Had shown the beauty that within it lies.
Her limpid eyes of blue, her chestnut hair,
By his dark splendor only showed more fair.
And by the charm of Love he grew beyond
The youth enraptured to the man most fond.

“Love is like some magician as it turns
Strange things to glory in the soul it burns.
Frail natures strengthen, strongest men grow
frail,

Vice turns to virtue, virtue oft may fail.
An Alchemist is Love, who has no care
Save just to work and bring his seed to
bear —

Bear oftentimes poor fruit, and oftentimes
The dearest richness, or, it may be, crimes.

“But, at the last, Edgardo came to grow
Distraught and restless, starting as a doe
At sudden knocks or flashings of the light
And, waking startled in the still midnight
Would rush across the floor, about to fling
The casement wide and through its void to
spring.

Strong as I am—who oft, indeed, have thrown
Edgardo prostrate as an olive blown
By high sea winds, when in our friendly bouts
We wrestled at the noontime ’mid the shouts
Of boon companions—in such freaks as these
I scarce could hold him surer than the breeze.
But one night waking, round about my neck
He threw his arms, and as though all the
wreck

Of hopes and dreams burst from his stranded
heart,

Through groans and tears that might have had
their start

In some sore-wounded god, he told me how
The maid he loved had broken every vow
So often pledged to him, and soon would wed
A lordly lover, one whose daily bread

Was at his call, who need but lift his hand
To gain the richest lady in the land.

“Then, when the morning broke, Edgardo went
His usual way and seemed to be content,
Save that his face grew thin ; his eyes so bright
I oft-times thought they saw beyond the sight
Of mortal men. Once only did he show
Aggrievance ; when a comrade, laughing low,
Uttered some scathing taunt of her he bit
His under lip, and o’er the curve of it
I saw a thin red stream of blood flow down,
As, with a glance more full of scorn than frown
Toward the man, he rose as one might feel
Who on a crawling worm had set his heel.
She wedded. So, in time, did I.

Three years
Sped swiftly by with all their joys and fears,
And on the street I heard that she had come
Back to the place that was her childhood’s
home.

Then it was said the lord she wed had cast
His wife away with tauntings of the past,—
Her poorer youth, the lover who was still

Unwed, and waited on her wavering will
To come to her. And rumors rose that she
Was careless of her honor, loved to see
The red wine brimming high within the cup,
Was known with men of vile repute to sup.
And then—and then—ah, pity me!—I heard
My friend was dying. He had caught a word
That slid through latticed windows—rushed
within,

And found her with the comrade of her sin,
Who had his right hand raised, about to smite
The woman's face. As lightning through the
night,

Edgardo struck him, when he turned and drew
His polished steel and ran its sharpness through
My noble friend.

This, this is all! Now go,
And unto every man whom you do know
Talks of his death as shame, I pray you say
What I have told you on the bridge this day.
If such a death as his be shame, then I
Crave, like my friend, a shameful death to
die!"

THE STAR'S MISSION.

A BABY clasped its hands and slept:
Across its eyes like gentians blue
The veined white eyelids downward crept,
The red lips took a paler hue.

They raised it from the cradle low
And laid it in a harder bed,
Amid soft laces, and the glow
Of blossoms at its feet and head.

They hid it from the mother's sight —
The mother with the empty arms —
The sunshine glimmered blinding bright,
And all the field-flowers lost their charms.

The night came on with stars and dew
And clear calm moonlight, and the smell
Of moistened flower-cups and the few
Dank mosses by the unused well.

And "Oh!" the mother thought, "how bare
The earth can be of sweets!" and still
The stars shone straightway through the air,
The asters nodded on the hill.

But all the world was narrowed down —
To her for whom it once was wide —
And crowded in the hillock brown
New-rounded on the meadow-side.

And then she saw one star that grew
Of separate lustre from the rest,
Its glorious radiance shimmered through
The frozen sorrow in her breast.

"Perhaps," she said, "it is the star
That led to where the Christ-child lay,
And I? O, I am very far
From Him who took my child away;

"I will arise and go to Him,
And pray for peace and righteous grace
To light the deathly shadows grim
That hover o'er my baby's face!"

And peace descended from its height,
And earth regained its wonted charms,
The mother-heart shed warmth and light
On other children in her arms;

But still she kept one place apart
And none but God might enter there,
The sacred corner of her heart
Where her dead child was shrined in prayer.

THE WIFE OF ATTILA DIED.

SO the wife of Attila died, and behold there
was mourning in Hunia :
And into the stream, which curved like a bow
about the crescent-shaped headland,
They cast green leaves from the nut trees, that
the current might bear them downward,
And the maidens of other nations who filled
their pitchers and vases,
And the warriors who brought their horses to
quench their thirst in the river,
Seeing the blue-gray bosom of the stream covered
thick with the leaflets,
Should know that some one beloved of all had
died in the land of the Huns.

And on the day counting third from the day of
her dying, they laid her
Straight on the short, sweet grass, with her
white, dead face turned upward,

And eyes that were shut from the sunlight like
violets under the snow.

They plaited her hair with gems, and locked
her fingers together; and then,

When the moon stood in the midst of the
heavens and the stars in their places,

They made her a bed in the ground, and folded
a coverlet over

Cut from the greenest of turf, and on it they
planted a rose-bush,

Whose blossoms and leaves should gather all
that the world gave voice to,

And whose roots, running down, might tell her
all that was passing in Hunia.

And there they left her alone, for into her
grave could go nothing

Of husband and children but love, and that
love was her portion forever,

So long as the breath of life was in Attila
and his descendants.

AMONG THE GRASSES.

O THE sweet, sweet grasses growing in the
field,
And all the lovely weed-flowers that such faint
fragrance yield !
I lie and watch them bending beneath the
breeze that blows
Across the rolling river and gardens of the
rose.

O the sweet grasses that ask not name nor
fame !
Just a little place to grow each Summer-time
the same ;
A shower of rain, a breath of wind scented by
the fruit,
A bit of blessed sunshine to warm them at the
root.

O the sweet, sweet grasses, let them have their
way!

Nothing makes more beautiful than they the
Summer day;

The buttercups and clover, the sky-blue chic-
cory,—

When I am laid away at last may these grow
over me.

I seem to hear them singing, weed-flowers and
grass,

When here I come to rest me and watch the
white clouds pass.

They've brought me peace and courage by
their unconscious grace

When Sorrow's hand was on my heart, its tear-
drops on my face.

O the sweet grasses and weed-flowers in the
mead!

Well they know how best to ease the spirit in
its need.

What wonder that the bird is glad to make his
nest among
The tangled stems and blossoms when his
blithe song is sung!

O the sweet grasses! amid them here I rest
With all the sunset splendor a-burning in the
West.
Sometime, when on the tired heart my hands
are folded down,
Good friends, I pray you, bring me here to
sleep outside the town.

ABOUT MYSELF.

AH me! I met a man to-day
Who used to seem the very dream
Of what I wished myself to be;
He often lingered on his way
To watch us in our boyish play,
Or ask me something laughingly
About myself.

And yet to-day he did not know
That ever he had met with me.
He touched the binding of his hat,
And raised his head a trifle — so;
My name broke up his stiffness though,
And then we had a quiet chat
About myself.

It must have seemed so queer to him
To think those years of hopes and fears
Had made the little boy a man.

I wonder why his eyes grew dim
When mine began to over-brim
As swiftly on his questions ran
About myself.

He is quite old and gray and bent,
And I am—well, I will not tell!
But he was just as old as I
Am now, when on the street he lent
Spare moments to my merriment,
And I ne'er took a thought or sigh
About myself.

He said he had been glad to see
My name at times affixed to rhymes
Or books that won a long review.
And that his daughters both would be
Much pleased if I would come to tea,
They had so often spoken too
About myself.

I'll take him at his word, and go
Some Sunday night to get a sight
At Mary and at Margaret.

They used to like me well, I know,
And time cannot have changed me so
 They'll fail to find some graces yet
 About myself.

But, ah! my heart! Those years, those years
Through which sharp pain like April rain
 Fell down my pathway as I walked.
So much comes back of loss and fears
I almost wish — alas! these tears! —
 I had not met that man, and talked
 About myself.

MEMORIALS.

A QUEEN'S handmaiden, very young and
fair,

One early morning planted lilies where
The sunlight fell upon a pretty spot
Hedged thickly with the blue forget-me-not.
Far from the fragrant gardens of the Court
In which great roses bloomed of every sort,
Where lovely lilacs hung in clusters sweet
And pansies made rich carpets for the feet.
A little corner she held wondrous dear
Because she often met her lover here,
A bird-voiced Troubador, whose magic lute
Struck, with its music, other minstrels mute.

And there she found, one splendid afternoon
When all the air was filled with scents of June,
The queen in tears.

“Who planted these?” she said.

“’Twas I,” the maiden answered with bowed head.

“And why?” “Because, your majesty, the place

Has precious memories.” She raised her face
And saw the queen was looking down at her
More tenderly than ever through the blur
Of tear-drops on her lashes.

“And for me,”

In measured accents spake her majesty,
“Long years ago, before my lord was king,
When I, a child, cared not for anything
But sun and flowers and all delights of life,
We played here, and he called me then his
wife :

And after years had passed, we older grown,
He wooed and won me here to share his
throne.

My babes here, with their nurses, used to play
In merry gambols each sunshiny day.

What wonder then the place is consecrate
To sacred thoughts that heed no gloomy Fate?
But it is dear to you as well, and you
Have planted here these lilies wet with dew

For a memorial. O girl of mine !
Full often shall you leave upon Love's shrine
An offering like this in future years
And sanctify it by your flowing tears.
But, listen child, that day must come to all
When castles built in girlhood surely fall.
And so sometimes with Love : a tiny worm
Eats the foundation that we thought so firm.
And the high turrets topple and come down
Though she who raised them may have worn a
crown.

“Be patient, dear, permit not Jealousy
To enter at Love's portals ; keep the key
Always against your bosom and be sure
Nothing can harm you if your soul is pure.
Though bitter foes surround, full-armed to fight,
Virtue and Faith may slay them in a night.

“Take an old woman's counsel (you are young)
And set a seal on an impulsive tongue.
Give to your lover more than he bestows
Not, like some maidens, always rose for rose.

Not measured singly out a smile for smile,
Else frowns will follow every once a while
And tears wash Love away as tidal waves
Bear land-flowers with them to unhallowed
 graves."

Then the queen blessed her as she blushing
 stood

Like a peach-blossom in her maidenhood.
And, after many years had passed away,
To this same place a matron came one day
And brought a child who played at cup and
 ball

While, once again for a memorial,
The mother with a smile that made her fair
Planted great white and stately lilies there.

SYMPATHY.

I N sorrow once there came to me
Two friends to proffer sympathy.

One pressed warm, dewy lips on mine,
And quoted from the word divine :

Wiped the hot tear-drops from my eye
And gave my sore heart sigh for sigh :

Told me of pain he had outgrown —
Pain that was equal to my own,

And left me with a tender touch
That should have comforted me much.

But still my sorrow was no less
For all his loving graciousness.

The other only pressed my hand ;
Within his eyes the tears did stand.

He said no word, but laid a rare
Bunch of sweet flowers beside my chair;

And closely held my hand the while
He cheered my sad gloom with his smile.

And ere he went he sang a song
That I had known and loved for long.

And then he clasped my hand again
With the same look that shares a pain.

So when he went I laid my head
Down, and was glad and comforted.

What was the difference, can you tell?
I loved my friends, alike and well;

I loved them both alike, and yet
The one's warm kiss I could forget,

The other's hand-clasp I could feel
For hours through all my being steal.

Each shared my sorrow, yet to me
One brought but love, one sympathy.

AHMED.

WITH wrath-flushed cheeks, and eyelids red
Where anger's fiercest sign was spread,
And hands whose clenched nails left their print
In the brown palm's deep, sun-warmed tint,
The chieftains sate in circle wide,
And in the centre, on his side,
Thrown like a dog, a thieving brute,
Lay Ahmed, frowning, bound and mute.

"The man who takes an offered bribe
From chieftain of an alien tribe
Shall die." So ran the Arab law,
Read by a scribe; and Ahmed saw
In every eye that scanned his face
Burn the hot fury of his race.
His fate was told. All men must die
Some time; what cared he how or why?

They loosed his tight-swathed arms and feet,
Unwound the cashmere turban, sweet
With spice and attar, stripped the vest
Of gold and crimson from his breast,
And laid his broad, brown bosom bare
To scimeter and desert air.
He stood as moulded statues stand,
With sightless eye and nerveless hand.

As moulded statues stand, but through
The dark skin, at each breath he drew,
The wild heart's wilder beating showed.
Then on the sand he kneeled, and bowed
His head to meet the ready stroke;
The headsman threw aside his cloak,
The curved steel circled in the sun —
Ahmed was dead, and justice done.

SOMETIME.

SOMETIME—It gives me patience;
Sometime—It makes me strong;
I think but for that Sometime
I should not sing a song.

I used to feel you waited
Somewhere along the way,
And sometime I should find you,
As true I did one day.

And so I know most surely
As up the hills I climb,
That to each prayer I lift Him
God answers me,—Sometime.

IN ABSENCE.

WHERE art thou, O my friend, who used
to be

So near to me?

Somewhere on earth thou art, for I can feel—
Times when the dusky Nights about me steal—

A touch like thine

Press lightly on these tired hands of mine.

Where art thou, O my friend, who used to be
So near to me?

Earth is so very, very wide and rough,

I lack enough

Of strength to make my voice reach to thine
ear,

Or my so weary feet to thee draw near.

O, when wilt thou

Come unto me who criest loudly now —
Where art thou, O my friend, who used to be
So near to me?

Life is so long and Time so full of pain;
Come once again
To let me look upon thy sweet, pale face,
Thine eye so blue, thy wrist so set with grace!
Then shall I grow
As sunbeams make the Summer flowers to blow.
Where art thou now, my friend, who used to be
So near to me?

What if I failed a little in my love?
Those stars above
Falter sometimes in what they owe to God;
Should not I be forgiven whose feet have trod
So sad a way
In which more rain than sunshine filled the
day?
Where art thou, vanished friend, who used to
be
So near to me?

.

Come with thy fond, forgiving smile, once more
From that far shore
Lying somewhere with waves of sea set 'round,
And I shall hear the gladsomeness of sound
From thy dear lips,
As the bee joyfully sweet honey sips.
Where art thou, my one friend, who used to be
So near to me?

Am I to blame that I have weary grown
Standing alone?
If thou hadst trusted longer I had been
Secure of love on which my love to lean.
O, sure am I,
It would have paid thee to have lingered by.
Where art thou, trustless friend, who used to be
So near to me?

AT MIDNIGHT.

I STOOD in the night's great darkness
And heard the calling sea, —
Ever and ever 'twas speaking
Out of its heart to me.

It seemed like a voice belovéd
I had not heard for years,
And, like a mist in the morning,
My eyes were dim with tears.

I felt my heart grow purer,
I felt my soul float far
As if it were seeking Heaven
To shine there like a star.

And my lips, my lips made answer
Unto the sea's sad moan,
As if I had found my darling
And stood no more alone.

“Come to me, sweetheart,” I whispered,
“Come to my empty arms,
And see how close I will fold thee
From earth’s most vague alarms!

“Feel how my hands shall caress thee,
Feel how my heart will beat
Against thy heart as I hold thee
Near in this safe retreat!”

But the Voice spake low and sweetly:
“Dear, wouldst thou have me break
The bonds of peace that surround me,
Just for thy longing’s sake?

“Here in Death’s mystical mansion
Waiting for thee am I,
Why should I seek thee, who surely
Shalt find me, by and by?

“Ever my love groweth greater,
Ever thy love for me
Foldeth me over and over
Like the tide of the sea.

“Take to thyself more of patience,
Learn to be strong and wait,
And I—O love, I will stand here
Very close to the gate.”

I felt the breeze on my forehead,
I heard the moaning wave
Hushing itself into silence
Like the hush of the grave.

And then I grew calm and patient;
What if she did not stay?
Close to the gate I shall find her
When I go Home some day.





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